



City of Seattle

Department of Planning & Development

D. M. Sugimura, Director

EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE OF THE DOWNTOWN DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Project Number: 3016538

Address: 3031 Western Avenue

Applicant: Brad Hinthorne, Perkins + Will Architects, for Martin Selig Real Estate

Date of Meeting: February 4, 0214

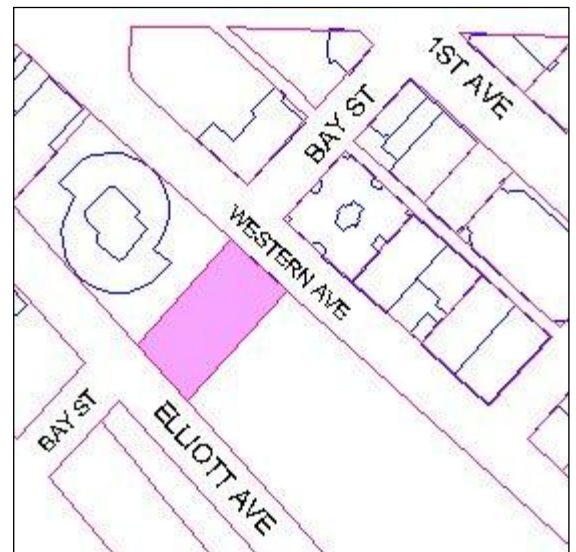
Board Members Present: Gabe Grant, Chair
Gundula Proksch
Murphy McCullough
Pragnesh Parikh

Board Member Absent: Matthew Albores

Land Use Planner present: Michael Dorcy

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

The Downtown development site is bounded by Western Avenue on the east, Elliott Avenue on the west, by the Airborne Express building site to the north and the Seattle Art Museum Olympic Sculpture Park on the south. Included within the development site is the former Bay Street right-of-way which was vacated under Ordinance 1114450 of the City of Seattle. Actual development within the vacated right-of-way is restricted by a Property Use and Development Agreement (PUDA). The development site is trapezoidal in shape, with the Elliott Avenue property line flaring slightly outward as it runs from north to south. It



measures approximately 100 feet in the north/south direction and 180-193 feet in the east/west direction. The total area is approximately 18,700 square feet in extent. Currently there is a structure on the site, occupying most of the area south of the vacated Bay Street. Formerly a warehouse building, it is now used for parking and is proposed for demolition in order to accommodate the envisioned development. The development site is zoned DMR/R125/65, with the area north of what was the centerline of Bay Street zoned DMC-65. The area directly across Western Avenue is likewise zoned DMC-65. The areas to the south and southwest are zoned DMR/R 125/65, same as the development site.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

The proposed development is for a 12 story residential building, containing approximately 100 units with below-grade parking for 75 vehicles. The parking garage would take access from the existing Airborne Express building's driveway and garage ramp off Western Avenue which bisects the eastern portion of the former Bay Street right-of-way. Project work would include landscape and pedestrian improvements along Western and Elliott Avenues.

ARCHITECTS' PRESENTATION:

There was a brief introduction by the developer and the developer's attorney, the latter explaining how an earlier residential proposal for the same site, having been recommended for approval by the Downtown Design Review Board and subsequently approved by the Director of the Department of Planning and Development, had, upon appeal, been returned to the Department by the City's Hearing Examiner on the technicality of incorrect public notice. It was noted that the intended design of the current proposal was essentially in keeping with that of the earlier proposed residential building.

First the site and existing uses around the site were briefly described, then a series of public open-space precedents shown with the intention of establishing a comparative basis for discussing appropriate, acceptable and successful precedents when assessing the relationships between the Olympic Sculpture Park and the structures and uses that that should surround it within the context of the City's urban environment. Three different models for the site, differing slightly in massing were next presented to the Board by the architectural team. Each was 125 feet in height as measured from both Elliott Avenue and Western Avenue, yielding a profile that stepped down toward the west at midpoint. The first alternative, identified as the "preferred" alternative, was of a structure 51 feet in width, set back 15 feet from the south property line and with all the mechanical equipment gathered at the north half of the upper roof. Massing option two was similar to the first option, 51 feet in width, but with a horizontal "slot" incised into the uphill portion of the upper tower at the roofline level of the lower portion of the structure. In addition, a portion of the structure at the southeast entry was eroded with the tower cantilevered above. The third option terminated the horizontal slot at the westernmost extent of the entry cantilever, and ran an incised vertical slot to that point, creating and inverted "L" or inverted boot shape resting on the rectangular box of the lower

portion of the structure and resolving some of what could be considered the awkwardness of the stepped profile. Each of the alternatives would allow for a large usable recreational space on the lower roof.

In each of the schemes, vehicular access would be from the existing driveway which provides access to underground parking beneath the Airborne Express building.

After asking a number of clarifying questions following the architect's presentation, the Board elicited comments from members of the public attending the meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

Comments solicited from the public included the following:

- The first member of the public to speak was from the Seattle Art Museum (SAM) and expressed some general concerns the SAM had concerning impacts of their Olympic Sculpture Park; these included the following items: balconies, shadows, reflections, blockage in summer of the western sun; there was no question of whether the proposed building would loom over the park, so choice of material and architectural articulation were of paramount importance; it needed to be a beautiful building.
- Several individuals spoke to the important "public interest" issues the proposal raised. Although relatively new, the Olympic Sculpture Park has gained a national and international reputation as a special place; the building should not be allowed to overwhelm the park; elements within the south-facing façade should not be allowed to compete with the park; were the balconies as shown in the packet on p.26 portents that suggested overwhelming? Other comments, variously: nothing should be built there, no structure should be more than 65 feet on the Western Avenue side, it should be a "quiet" building, it should be a spectacular building, "sculptural" like the park it abuts. No question is more important than that of context, both the physical and the cultural context of the proposal.
- Some of those attending were residents from nearby residential buildings; some expressed concerns about view blockage; others raised the broader issue of the "fit" of the height (at the allowed 125-foot zoning), bulk and scale of the proposed structure within the existing neighborhood character.
- "I would like to live there," one person said; the proposal would provide "eyes on the park." Downtown density is a good thing; density is a part of becoming a great city; the park was conceived as fitting into a denser fabric as the city would grow. Here is an opportunity for a quality structure that could enhance the existing context of the area. The architectural firm designing the building has displayed remarkable sensitivity and talent in other instances (Victoria, B.C.) and is quite capable of meeting the challenges here.
- Several other publically-voiced concerns dealt with issues which, as expressed, were less clearly related to elements of design: i.e., the adequacy of the parking proposed for

the project, the impacts on the availability of local parking and area traffic, construction noise, the possibility of unearthing contaminated soils.

PRIORITIES & BOARD RECOMMENDATIONS

After hearing the comments of those attending the meeting, the Board began by noting the responsibility of development on the site to respect the sculpture park to the south which has become in the short interval since its opening one of the City's great and cherished spaces. Having said that, the Board briefly identified issues and related them to specific questions. The first issue was that of congruency, related to the questions "What kind (size) of development, with what particular orientation and articulation would be congruent with the Sculpture Park?" Given the site and public comments regarding congruencies related to the site, and given the Board's role and responsibilities, the question put to the Board was "Which of the guidelines would set those parameters or benchmarks by which a successful development at this site would be recognized?"

At the moment, however, the Board did not believe that they had been given enough information in the presentation or presentation materials to attempt to assign guidelines, either those to be found in the City of Seattle's *Design Review: Guidelines for Downtown Developments* or/and the *Design Guidelines for the Belltown Urban Center Village*, which should be considered of highest priority to this project. The four members of the Board present at the meeting were agreed that the project should return for a second Early Design Guidance meeting. At that time the Board would like to be shown development alternatives that were more distinct in character and not just variations on a single theme as they believed those presented at this meeting had been. Given a fuller presentation, and one that responded to concerns expressed at the current meeting, the Board would be in a better position to impart guidance of specific pertinence for development of a successful project at this site. The proposed building would sit next to a world class sculptural park; for years to come it would be eminently visible from within the park. In this regard the basic challenge is the design of a structure that succeeds at some level in emulating the success of the design of the park.

It should be noted that according to the terms of the existing Property Use and Development Agreement (PUDA) the proposed structure would not be allowed to move north on the site beyond the southern edge of the former Bay Street right-of-way. Hence, there is a limit to any boldly generous setting-back of the entire mass of the proposed structure away from the property boundary with the Sculpture Garden.